The Builder.

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EVERY architect in practice has cause to complain of the want of skilful and earnest operatives,—men who understand the trade they profess to practice, find pleasure in the exercise of it, and are anxious to produce good work. We have, before this, commented on the decline apparent in many of the constructive arts, and shewed that it proceeds from excessive competition, which induces the master to require a certain *quantity* of work from a man without reference to its quality: he cannot afford to develope a man's ability, but demands the greatest amount of work in the smallest space of time: "superior work wont do; work that will pass is all that he can hope to give;" and the natural result is, that our workmen, as a body, have gradually "lost their cunning," and that the majority of operatives now employed are incapable of executing work which is at all out of the common way. Our bricklayers and smiths afford the most striking example of this decline; the old enthusiasm, which still lingers, though feeble, amongst other trades, especially with the masons, seems to have departed from them: they do their work as mere labourers, and have no pride in the result. There are, of course, many clever exceptions; but we speak of the mass. Very glad should we be if we could induce a different feeling on the subject, at all events in the minds of the *rising* operatives, and induce them to strive to excel, and to find their chief pleasure in the exercise and exhibition of their skill. The earnestness of the ancient workers is figured in the following curious passage from the "Apocrypha:"

"The smith sitting by the anvil, and considering the ironwork, the vapour of the fire wasteth his flesh, and he fighteth with the heat of the furnace: the noise of the hammer and the anvil is ever in his ears, and his eyes look still upon the pattern of the thing that he maketh; he setteth his mind to finish his work, and watcheth to polish it perfectly."*

It has been justly observed that, there is nothing so inconsiderable which may not become of importance when made an object of serious attention. An operative who applies an intelligent mind resolutely in the practice of his craft, elevates both the craft and himself, and will pass a much happier life than one who drudges through his day's work without excitement or feeling of interest.

To insure improvement in the constructive arts, it is of importance to obtain for the able and ingenious artisan a better place in society than he now holds. The intellect required is much greater than is wanted to form a very smart shopman, for the disposal of goods from behind a counter,—yet in the opinion of the world, the former holds a much inferior place to the latter, and is excluded from society to which the other would be admitted. This is not as it should be, and we would anxiously assist in bringing about a change of opinion in this respect. As matters now stand, an intelligent, well-informed youth has no inducement to apply himself to the practice of the constructive arts, as instead of gaining position by so doing, he will lose it, and the course is therefore left to men of less ability and lower grade.

We should be right glad to see all the master-builders following the good example set by a few of their body, and taking every means to increase the comforts, and raise the character, of the operatives in their employ. They would themselves find advantage in it, and we earnestly call upon them to commence the attempt forthwith.

To workmen we would say,—put your own shoulders to the wheel; become masters of your trade — artisans, not mere labourers — artists if you can, able to give a "because" for a "why,"—make your work your pleasure. An upright man who will do this cannot fail to rise, and better still, will pass a more useful and happier life, other things being equal, than one who has not pursued this course. Able workmen,—men with heads on their shoulders, are not plentiful, and are far too valuable to be disregarded. Notwithstanding an old writer says:—

"A cunning workman fine in cloister close may sit,
And carve and paint a thousand things, and use both art and wit;
Yet wanting world's renowne; may 'scape unsought or scene:
It is but Fame that outruns all, and gets the goale I weene;"

Such a workman may depend on securing remunerative employment, the good will and respect of his fellow citizens, and the applause of his own mind.

* Ecclesiasticus, c. xxxviii. v. 27. Written about 200 years before our era.

ST. MARY REDCLIFFE, BRISTOL.

THE restoration of this justly celebrated parish church is now to be commenced in earnest. Tenders for certain portions of the work were opened last week by the committee, and those of the following local tradesmen were accepted:—Wilcox and Sons for excavator, bricklayer, and mason's work; Griffiths fur carpenter's work; Fears for plumber's work; Edbrookes for smith's work; and Parkers for glazing. The ground is to be lowered all round the church, and a system of drainage introduced; the chancel is to be new roofed; the east window, long since bricked up, is to be opened, and the external masonry of this end of the chancel with certain parts on either side from the bottom to the top, including some of the beautiful flying buttresses and pinnacles, is to be wholly renewed. We sincerely hope that the masons will now never leave the ground till the whole building is restored, and the finial affixed to the spire which is to crown the glory of this noble pile. Mr. A. B. Hope, M.P., suggests that a separate subscription for the tower and spire should be made, and has forwarded a donation in furtherance of it.

Over the altar screen of the church as some of our readers will remember, there are three large paintings by Hogarth, "The Ascension of Christ," "The three Marys at the Sepulchre," and "The High Priest and Servants Sealing the Tomb." Being quite out of place here, though very valuable as rare examples of the master in a different line of art from that which he generally pursued, it is to be hoped they will be purchased for some public institution, and the proceeds applied to restore the ancient altar-screen, now hidden by a *pseudo* classic composition, and to bring into the general view of the church the lady-chapel, seen through the Gothic panelling of the screen.

These pictures were put up in 1735, at an expense of 761*l.** It is worth remark that, if instead of expending this sum in a manner not consistent with the character of the church, the money had been invested and the interest allowed to accumulate, it would now amount to 50,000*l.*, or more than enough to restore to the whole church its original stability and beauty, and give to modern Bristol one of the most perfect and noble monuments in Europe.

* Hogarth received for them 525*l.* The frames and fittings swallowed the remainder.

This fact might be usefully reflected on by committees in the present day. A similar statement will perhaps be made fifty years hence (or less), when subscriptions are solicited to defray the cost of restoring the homogeneity of St. James's church, Piccadilly, by taking out and changing the stained-glass window which they are now about to erect there at an expense of a thousand or two pounds. Further, they will say, this was done by the men who called their grandfathers barbarians, for placing Italian fittings in Gothic churches, and spent enormous sums of money in correcting the mistake, and rendering their ancient buildings in some degree consistent! It would seem after all, that we are little wiser than our forefathers.

THE EVIDENCE OF ITALIAN INFLUENCE UPON ELIZABETHAN ART.

THE increased desire for the preservation of national antiquities must afford extreme gratification to all in whose pursuits the science of archæology takes part. The historian, and archæologist, and the lover of the picturesque, now represent a large section of the people, whose interests, and whose tastes, not less than those of the agriculturist, or the manufacturer, might fairly demand recognition, and aid from Government. That there is no national institution, by which the rapid course of decay and spoliation, may, at once, be put an end to, is in truth a national disgrace, and the occasion of losses irreparable, made manifest in the continuance of much uncertainty in points of social and political history. Works of art are the archives of a country, of which the annals of history are impressions; whilst as the "exponents of national character" and manners, they are the crystallizations of thought, and the silent teachers of instructive lessons.* If the remains of churches and monastic buildings are valuable, and interesting for the light they shed upon the religious element of the state; the examples of domestic architecture give the picture of that history, which of all others is supremely valuable, least understood, and most in need of such illustration,—the history of social life. Therefore it is deeply to be regretted, that the hand so often stretched out, successfully, for the preservation of a parish church, has been withheld from the less conspicuous, but not less important castle or manor-house.

It is not our intention to give a history of domestic architecture in England, though in its connection with political events, and with the economy of private life, it would afford a most extensive field for research, and illustration. But, there was one period in the history of England, of which, more than any other, we can say, that we feel the influence; an age, in which literature was in an extraordinary state of brilliancy,—the truly glorious period of English history; and at that epoch it will be interesting to examine into the influence of architecture, of literature, and politics, each upon the rest.

The time of Elizabeth is one, which, viewed in every aspect, stands boldly conspicuous. The resistance of liberty to foreign aggression, and to papal influence, was then most powerfully developed, and the country placed in a high position in the scale of European nations. Literature and art shed a halo round the court of the British Gloriana: Shakespeare, Jonson, Spenser, and Sidney were the great "not for this age, but for all time." The link between the chivalry, that had gone before, and the refinement, that was to succeed; the Elizabethan age was the creation of most, that, at this day, we contemplate with pride, as Englishmen, and with gratification, as lovers of literature and poetry. The state of the art of architecture of that day was singular, yet, in some respects, prosperous. The building of palaces was a passion, singularly prolific. The settled state, into which the kingdom came after years of bad government was a circumstance favourable to the display of genius, and to the appreciation of its works. At this juncture, it will be our object to consider what circumstances, in the state of art and literature, were mutually influential, and are explanatory of each other.

The earliest remains of English domestic

* *Vide* "Architecture—the Exponent of National Character," p. 433, *ante*.

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